

## **In Touch Newsletter**

**July 2023**

### **Exercises you can do in bed**

Parkinson's progresses at different stages for everyone. In the advanced stages some people may become bedbound.

Whether you are confined to bed due to Parkinson's, an injury, or surgery you risk losing muscle mass and strength. Your muscles will also shorten and tighten whilst in bed which will cause muscle cramps and pain.

However, there are several exercises you can do whilst in bed to help maintain your strength and flexibility.

#### **Palm Stretches**

Palm stretches help maintain hand function, whether it's for reading books or engaging in your favourite hobbies while bedbound. This exercise can also prevent hand stiffness and pain. Stretch each hand out as far as possible and then make a fist and squeeze the fingers to the palms.

#### **Arm Lifts**

When confined to bed for long periods your muscles become restless. Lift your arms off the mattress and hold them there for 10 seconds. This will strength the arms and shoulders and increase blood flow which helps circulation and prevents cramping. If possible, hold the position for 10 seconds.

#### **Shoulder Shrugs and Rolls**

To exercise your shoulder, back and neck muscles try doing shoulder shrugs and rolls. Lift your shoulders as high as you can, hold a few seconds then pull down and hold a few seconds. Repeat around 10. These areas can get very stiff when your constantly in bed. This will make movement easier and less painful.

#### **Leg Lifts**

Lifting your legs works your core muscles, including the abs, obliques, and lower back. These muscles can help you to sit up in bed or swing sideways to stand when necessary. Keep the knees bent to lessen the load on the abdominal muscles. If possible, hold the position for 10 seconds.

#### **Bridging**

Lie on your back, bend both knees facing upwards. Lift the hips up and hold the position for 3 sec, slowly lower your hips back down. Repeat 6 to 8 times.

#### **Core**

Bend both knees and tighten your lower stomach below the belly button. Hold this position and lift one leg upwards direction and slowly lower it down. Repeat the same with the other side. This procedure can be done 7 or 8 times for each leg. Working

on the core part of the body protects the back and keeps it stable while turning in bed or getting up from the bed.

### **Flex and Point**

Lying on your back, point the right foot while flexing the left foot at the same time. Alternate this slowly around 10 times. Then flex your both feet to sense the stretch on your legs and calf muscles.

### **Side Leg Lift**

Resting on your back with flexed feet slightly apart. Place your hands under your bottom for support and stability. Lift the legs slightly and take them wide apart, to make a Y shape. Hold this position for 2 to 3 seconds and then bring them down slowly. This exercise will help to strengthen your leg and hip muscles. Repeating this will improve lower back pain.

### **Hamstrings**

Lay back on your back so that you can be in a comfortable position and then you bend one leg and press the ankle of the bent leg into the mattress. Hold the position for 5 seconds and then relax. Follow the same process with the other leg. This will help your leg muscles to become strong.

### **Pelvic Tilt**

Lie on your back with your legs bent. Gently pull your stomach in and push your back flat into the mattress. Hold for 5 seconds then relax. Repeat for 6 to 8 times. It's an easy exercise to do in bed and strengthens the core, reduces back pain, and help with sitting.

### **Glutes**

Keep your feet flat on the mattress and tighten your bottom muscles. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax. This will also strengthen your bottom and core muscles.

Staying in bed for long periods put you at a high risk of pressure sores, poor blood circulation, bone density loss, pain, reduced joint movement, depression, and incontinence.

However, there are plenty of exercise options even if your mobility is limited. Try these exercises to help prevent other health problems associated with spending too much time in bed.

Before starting any exercise regime, make sure you consult with your doctor first.

### **References:**

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## **Magnesium, muscles, and Parkinson's**

Do you often have night-time leg cramps, or restless legs syndrome? If so, you might be deficient in a very important mineral – magnesium.

Recent research has suggested that people living with Parkinson's are often deficient in magnesium, which may have a protective role to play in regard to neurological diseases in general.

Magnesium is a mineral involved in hundreds of processes throughout our bodies. It belongs to the electrolyte family, which affects functions such as muscle movement.

It can be difficult to pin down magnesium deficiency and – as blood tests aren't always reliable – it's important to be aware of symptoms, as they may be the best indicators of deficiency.

The symptoms of magnesium deficiency include insomnia, fatigue, and weakness; muscle cramps, spasms, and twitches; restless legs syndrome; confusion, irritability, anxiety, and depression; a loss of appetite; and difficulty breathing.

Confusingly, these symptoms can be caused by a range of other factors that are not to do with magnesium. However, since magnesium deficiency is widespread in Parkinson's, you should talk to your doctor if you experience some of these.

### **What does magnesium do?**

Magnesium is needed for energy production, to convert vitamin D to its active form, to control blood glucose, and to regulate blood pressure, among hundreds of other important tasks.

Perhaps most significantly for people living with Parkinson's, it plays an especially important role in muscle function. When there is a magnesium deficiency, the muscle isn't able to relax as easily, causing cramping or spasms.

In extreme cases it can lead to tetany – a severe contraction of the muscles, usually in the hands or feet but sometimes in the oesophagus or larynx (voice box). It can even affect lung function, making it more difficult to breathe.

The best insurance is to eat foods rich in magnesium – it is usually better absorbed from food than from supplements. These include nuts such as almonds, cashews and peanuts, fruit and vegetables like spinach, avocado, potatoes, and bananas, as well as cereals and pulses.

If you think you might need supplements of magnesium, you should discuss this with your doctor, as there are some conditions that need care when it comes to magnesium supplements. Kidney disease, diabetes, slow heart rate, bowel obstruction, and myasthenia gravis are examples. Also, magnesium supplements can interact unfavourably with some medications.

If your doctor agrees that magnesium supplements are a good idea, they will indicate how much you should be taking.

Magnesium is among the minerals most vital to human health, but it's also one of the most neglected. Take a few moments to consider whether you're getting enough of this important nutrient, or whether it might be a good idea to talk with your doctor about supplements.

Here are some examples of [foods rich in magnesium](#).

### Source

Kathrynne Holden, former National Parkinson Foundation dietician (UK)  
Visit her website, [nutritionucanlivewith.com](http://nutritionucanlivewith.com), for more Parkinson's-related nutrition information

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## Macarthur Support Group Celebrates 23<sup>rd</sup> Birthday

The Parkinson's NSW Macarthur Support Group celebrated its 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday in June.

Group Leader Lorraine Rutledge said: "I have been with the Macarthur Parkinson's Support Group since 2002 when I was a carer for my mother, and I have been Leader since about 2014.

"I have enjoyed my time with the people of Macarthur who have Parkinsons and view them as a special 'family' in my life. It has been a privilege getting to know people who otherwise may never have crossed my path, and to be of help to them as they journey this side of their life."

Parkinson's NSW Support Group Coordinator Stacey Foster was also invited to attend the birthday celebration.

"I congratulate you all on reaching this amazing milestone of service to the Parkinson's community, and a special thanks goes to Lorraine for her leadership and years of commitment to the Group," she said.

"As with other Groups, Macarthur provides crucial peer-to-peer support at the community level. I am also impressed by Macarthur's highly cooperative group culture. It was great to see everyone pitch in to help set up and pack down the room, share tips and information, and enjoy one another's company."

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## **My [Parkinson's] Life - Guy Mitchell**

Guy Mitchell grew up in the central-west New South Wales town of Mendooran until he was 16, when his family moved to Newcastle.

"I've lived there ever since," says Guy, now 68. "Except for six years when I was in the regular army and moved around a bit."

Guy joined the army a couple of years out of school and credits his time there with valuable skills for life.

"I worked in logistics and developed problem-solving skills as well as practical skills like administration," he says. "But one of the biggest things was learning self-discipline."

Following his army years, Guy moved to the Royal Newcastle Hospital and worked in the stores and purchasing departments, where his army experience was very useful. He then moved into Community Health and ran the Aids for the Disabled community team at John Hunter Hospital.

After a work accident which affected his back and his ability to work nine-to-five, Guy's decade in the health system finished, and he looked around for something to suit his skillset and situation.

"I ended up in the entertainment Industry," says Guy. "Music had started out as a hobby for me; I played the guitar and harmonica and played a lot of bass guitar in bands on and off. Then I met a guy who became a very good mate. We started a national country music magazine which went for while... but nothing lasts forever.

"I decided to focus on music and had a band, which was a three-piece, but could also be a four or five piece, or just two – you have to be flexible. I played in that until about 2000.

"By then I was starting to get a bit old for the lifestyle and I'd done about 15 years in bands. I decided I would retrain and go into event management. I'd been doing it anyway for more than a decade, and once I was qualified, I also started teaching it." But unexpected open-heart surgery which included a quadruple bypass changed Guy's life again.

"I found I couldn't handle doing some of the things they were doing for rehab," he recalls. "I ended up going into hospital because my kidneys were shutting down. I came through that with the help of family and friends and started rehab again.

"Then one of the specialists I was seeing for the kidney issues said she thought I had Parkinson's. I was 62 by then. In hindsight there were lots of things I didn't pick up on earlier. I was put on a treatment which made me feel so much better in 24 hours and life went on."

But after a few years, Guy's condition deteriorated, and he needed more and more help from his wife.

"It's damn hard for just one person," he says. "I ended up getting assistance through NDIS. I got a bit of equipment and kept trying to just push through. But the support workers I have now are absolutely brilliant. I need assistance 24/7 and they are an absolutely amazing team."

Guy describes Newcastle music therapist, Carlin McLennan, as an 'unbelievable' person who got him back to music.

"I've written and recorded about six songs since," he says. "One of the support workers ended up being a musician himself, and I've found a bit of a network with old mates from school who were in bands, too."

"I've also started a YouTube music channel with a bit of music, comedy, everything."

The address is: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNEBK\\_Ciue8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNEBK_Ciue8)

It's named after the first song I wrote about getting Parkinson's – *Me and Mr P*." More than a year ago Guy put together a show on his back veranda.

"It went damn well," he recalls. "Now I'm working on putting on a better show. I can't play bass anymore, so I mainly do vocals and most of the writing."

"I've also written a book on event management to help young people who want to get into the entertainment industry – what you have to know and do legally, and all the things I've learned. I'm hoping to get it published."

Guy, who married a couple of years into the army, has two children aged 36 and 31.

"My son works in disability support services but also has an interest in professional wrestling," says Guy. "He owns a production company and a training school as well as performing himself. My daughter started running kids' discos in high school for pocket money. So, there's a bit of entertainment business in both of them!"

"A few years ago, my son put on a professional wrestling event to raise money for Parkinson's NSW and that went really well."

"A couple of weeks ago there was the *Ride for Guy* motorcycle event which had motorcycle clubs, bands and raffles etc to raise money for a van with wheelchair access for me. My son's friend created the event, and everyone ran with it. It was really great."

While Guy applauds his family, carer team and the help he's receiving, what he'd really like to see is more government funding for more diverse support groups for people living with Parkinson's.

"People can have Parkinson's at different ages and with different needs and interests," says Guy. "Earlier on I was too busy with my work and family life to put the

time into a support group. Now that I have the time and the skills, I don't have the energy and the ability they need any more.

“There are wonderful Parkinson's specialist nurses who would be great doing it, but they already have more than enough to do. These groups are really important for people living with Parkinson's. Making support groups work takes time and experience.

“I hope that the government will recognise the importance of support groups to people who have to live with Parkinson's changes over many years.”

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